

Montgomery council to weigh in on 'serious incident' reporting in schools

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An action plan regarding the reporting of "serious incidents" in Montgomery County's 199 public schools should be developed no later than April 1, according to a county Office of Legislative Oversight report published Tuesday.

The report, which was given to County council members during Tuesday's council meeting, urges members to push the Board of Education and school officials to develop a uniform way of reporting the incidents to the public.

It also urges the County council to set a Nov. 1 deadline for county police, school officials and the State's Attorney's office to determine how to share and investigate information about suspected crimes on school property.

Maryland does not require public schools to track and report criminal behavior on its campuses to local and state authorities, the report said.

There is "a commonly held perception" among parents that the school system "does not consistently

share information about all serious incidents," according to the report.

The county began tracking serious incidents, including fights and gang activity, in the 1970s. It began replacing its decade-old database in 2004. About 50 schools use the new system, spokesman Brian Edwards said. It will be in place in all county schools Jan. 2. It will allow school officials to better access school safety, he said.

"You can look at trends, you can look at root causes," Edwards said.

The council scheduled a work session on the issue Oct. 19.

"We think it's a good report with a lot of information and a lot of good suggestions," Edwards said.

Tuesday's meeting was the first time the full council had gathered since the Sept. 12 primary elections.

President George Leventhal, who won his primary re-election bid as an at-large Democrat, was sure to remind other members that Tuesday was International Talk Like A Pirate Day.

Wearing a black eye patch, Leventhal told members that if they didn't "commemorate" the day, they'd "walk the plank."

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